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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. von WAGNER (Germany)

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The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 156: RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK AND REFORM OF THE AGENDA OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE (continued) (A/C.1/48/L.51)

1. The CHAIRMAN, referring to agenda item 156, entitled "Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee", drew attention to draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.51 and invited the members of the Committee to comment on it.

2. Mr. THANARAJASINGAM (Malaysia) asked the Chairman to confirm that the First Committee would continue to consider agenda item 76 within the broad topic area "International security".

3. The CHAIRMAN confirmed that that was indeed the case.

4. Mr. DZVAIRO (Zimbabwe) took note of the Chairman's answer and thanked the representative of Malaysia for having asked the question.

5. Mr. EL TINAY (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the members of the Group considered that the question of Israeli nuclear armament should be considered by the First Committee within the broad topic area "Regional disarmament and security".

6. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) said that in his delegation's view, the second subparagraph of paragraph 1 of the draft resolution under consideration was designed to ensure that the First Committee did not spend time on a sterile general debate and was linked to paragraph 2 in such a way that the agenda items which could be clustered within the broad topic areas referred to in that paragraph would likewise benefit from the "more detailed and focused discussion". He also noted that the Chairman had confirmed that the question of Antarctica would be addressed within the broad topic area "International security".

7. Mr. DANIELI (Israel) said that the question of Israeli nuclear armament did not belong on the agenda of the First Committee.

8. Mr. EL TINAY (Sudan) recalled that the Committee had adopted draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.48, the last paragraph of which stated that the question of Israeli nuclear armament would be included in the agenda of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

9. The CHAIRMAN suggested that draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.51 should be adopted without a vote. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution.

10. It was so decided.

11. Mr. LAVINA (Philippines) said he welcomed the practice which had enabled the Chairman to submit a draft resolution. The Chairman was to be commended for the efforts he had made in that connection.

12. Mr. COLLINS (Ireland) said that he welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution, even though he would have liked the Committee to go further. His delegation was among those which attached the greatest importance to disarmament and international security, but considered that having a Main Committee devote itself to those topics would not necessarily ensure that they were given priority in the hierarchy of important matters with which the United Nations had to deal. His delegation also thought that the General Assembly should have a general political committee, which should preferably be the First Committee. Since the General Assembly intended to take up some of the ideas in the Chairman's paper of 3 November, they could be considered in the body established for that purpose, namely the informal open-ended working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly. His delegation also noted that the First Committee was hesitant about tackling the admittedly difficult domain of political questions.

13. Mr. GUILLAUME (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Union, said that at the resumed session of the First Committee in March 1992 the Twelve had shown their interest in rationalization by circulating a working paper on the subject. They attached great importance to the question and in line with resolution 47/54 G had pursued their course by requesting the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of the item under consideration. At the beginning of that session, the members of the European Union had produced a "non-paper" outlining their ideas. The non-aligned countries had done the same and other suggestions had followed. A working group had met for two weeks and all participants were to be congratulated on the constructive spirit they had shown. Among all the debates at the current session, the one in the working group could be cited as an example of a fruitful dialogue that had produced constructive results. Special gratitude was due to the Netherlands delegation, which had made a valuable contribution to the work.

14. Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.51 had been adopted by consensus and the First Committee should now have the tool it needed to help the Chairman direct its work. It was perhaps only a first step, but it was a significant one. In any case, it was an important prerequisite for the continued improvement of the First Committee's work.

15. The CHAIRMAN said he agreed with the representative of Belgium that the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.51 was a step in the right direction, although he agreed with the representative of Ireland that the Committee could, perhaps, have gone further. The text was a solid basis for future action. Encouraged by the delegation of Ireland and feeling that it might be acceptable to delegations, he had taken the initiative of circulating in the same form the notes he had circulated at the beginning of November, accompanied by a brief covering note (A/C.1/48/9). That document did not call for a decision, but was designed solely to provide delegations with food for thought on ways of reforming the First Committee so as to make it more effective.

(The Chairman)

16. In the course of his consultations on the subject with many delegations, most had advocated a change in the organization of the Committee's work which was unrelated to the rationalization envisaged in the draft resolution just adopted, which related to the programme of work. In a paper dated 19 November which was to be circulated, he had taken the initiative of setting forth a number of ideas which delegations might ponder at the informal meetings that might be devoted to the Committee's programme of work at future sessions of the General Assembly. The paper took into account the widely held view that the time available to the Committee should be spent in the most rational and structured way possible. The paper could serve as the basis for the consultations which he intended to organize in 1994, subject to the agreement of his Government possibly during the session of the Disarmament Commission. It set forth a possible approach to the organization of the Committee's work and the proposals it contained were examples only and in no way prejudged future organizational requirements, such as the number of meetings allocated to the Committee. The rest of the paper reproduced wishes expressed by a large number of delegations during his consultations to which no objections had been raised thus far. They would be considered during the consultations he was requested to hold under paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.51.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.